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**ORANGE COVE BUSINESSMAN PLEADS TO CONSPIRACY
TO LAUNDERING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN FRAUDULENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS**

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that on Monday, March 12, 2007, the day before his jury trial was to begin, SALAMEH MOHAMMAD RASHID, 58, of Reedley, pled guilty before United States District Judge Oliver Wanger to conspiracy to launder money stemming from his cashing of fraudulent unemployment insurance benefits as owner of "Primo Market " in Orange Cove, California.

This case is the product of an extensive investigation by the United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, and the California Employment Development Department, Investigation Division with assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Stanley A. Boone and Sheila K. Oberto, who prosecuted the case, the defendant cashed thousands of fraudulent unemployment insurance checks for approximately sixteen million dollars from the period of 1999 to April 23, 2003. While the large majority of the checks cashed by the defendant were fraudulent California Employment Development Department ("EDD") unemployment insurance checks, the defendant also cashed fraudulent out of state checks from Nevada, Arizona, Idaho, Washington and Texas.

According to United States Attorney Scott, "The federal government will vigorously pursue persons who take from a system designed to help those in need."

"Combating fraud in the unemployment insurance program is a priority for the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. Stealing the identity of unsuspecting, innocent citizens to defraud a program that provides income assistance to those who lose their jobs through no fault of their own is deplorable," stated Gordon S. Heddell, Inspector General, Department of Labor. "We are committed to working with other law enforcement agencies to vigorously investigate this type of crime."

"The Employment Development Department (EDD) has a zero tolerance policy toward criminals who commit unemployment insurance fraud," Patrick Henning, EDD Director, said. "Just as we are dedicated to providing prompt and professional service to unemployed workers, we are committed to vigorously prosecuting those who try to enrich themselves by stealing from the unemployment insurance fund."

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